

# Nevada Department of Education

Quarterly Newsletter

Vol. 10 No. 1

## IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Superintendent's Message.....</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Newsletter Distribution Change..</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Best Wishes.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>U.S. Constitution .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Survey Finds Problems .....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>More New Schools.....</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Excellence Panel Selected.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Nevada Teacher Honored .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Blueprint for Improvement .....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Congratulations.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>State Board Annual Retreat.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Nevada Report Card.....</i>	<i>5</i>

### Keith W. Rheault

*Superintendent of  
Public Instruction*

### Gloria Dopf

*Deputy Superintendent of  
Instructional, Research and  
Evaluative Services*

### Douglas C. Thunder

*Deputy Superintendent of  
Administrative and Fiscal Services*

### Nevada Department of Education

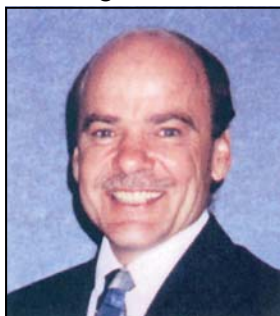
*700 E. Fifth Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701  
and*

*1749 Moody Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89706*

*Southern Nevada Office  
1820 E. Sahara, Suite 205  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89104-3746*

## Superintendent's Message

"Nevada continues to rank at or near the bottom in state-by-state comparisons for student achievement in reading and math." That's one of



Keith W. Rheault

the conclusions in a study recently released about our state by WestEd, the educational laboratory that serves western

states, including Nevada. The study went on to explain that "Nevada's poor marks largely stem from the state's population boom, particularly in Clark and Washoe Counties, and this rapid influx of new students. Teachers face additional challenges from immigrant students who struggle to learn English at the same time they must learn math and science content," said **Paul Koehler**, Director of WestEd's Policy Center.

While we don't enjoy receiving bad news about our education system, especially as it relates to the low achievement of some of our students, the study does laud our efforts to reduce class size, offer more pre-school education opportunities, build an education technology infrastructure, strengthen teacher quality, and develop a uniform student information system.

(more...page 5)

## Newsletter Distribution Change

Future issues of the Nevada Department of Education Quarterly Newsletter will be available via the website. Readers may log on to the Department website at:

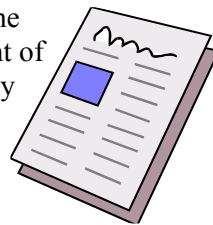
<http://www.doe.nv.gov>

Click on "Newsletter" under the menu title "Home" in the left side column.

Readers may also receive the Newsletter via e-mail. If you wish to receive it directly, please send your e-mail address to **Mary Geisler** at:

[mgeisler@doe.nv.gov](mailto:mgeisler@doe.nv.gov)

or complete the form below and mail it to Mary Geisler, Nevada Department of Education, 700 E. 5th Street, Carson City, NV 89701.



### Newsletter Request Via E-mail

Please send me the Nevada Department of Education Newsletter to my e-mail address.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Best Wishes** go to **Darlene Cain**, who recently retired from the Department of Education.

Darlene began work in 1995 for the Department of Education as a Program Assistant in the Office of Finance and Accountability. Her duties included collecting student data for the Student Management and Records Transfer (SMART) program. Later, she transitioned into the new student database program, System Accountability Information in Nevada (SAIN.)

Darlene retired June 6, 2005; she and her husband Ken have relocated to Kauai, Hawaii.

The Department is grateful to Darlene for her many years of service and wishes her a long and healthy retirement.

## Nevada Schools Commemorate U.S. Constitution

In December 2004, the U.S. Congress passed a bill requiring school



districts across the nation who receive federal assistance to commemorate the signing of the U.S. Constitution. School districts were encouraged to arrange the recognition ceremonies and related activities as close as possible to the anniversary of the signing, September 17 of each year. The Constitution was signed on September 17, 1787.

Students at Tomiyasu Elementary School in Las Vegas conducted an assembly featuring the Preamble to the Constitution.

## Survey Finds Problems With High Schools

On August 24, 2005, the Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) released the results of a survey regarding how the public perceives the nation's high schools. All demographic groups surveyed ranked the need to improve America's

high schools as the most important reform priority in the kindergarten-to-college continuum.

Among other things, the survey showed that strong majorities believe the following:

- Receiving a high school diploma does not necessarily mean that graduates are prepared for the challenges of college or work-place training.
- Too many students are dropping out before attaining a high school diploma, and they and the nation suffer as a result.
- Investing in elementary school improvement, while important, does not inevitably lead to success in high school.
- Leadership is important, but respondents know little about the high school reform initiatives launched by the President and governors.

The survey also showed that the public believes improving reading and writing is the most important factor for increasing graduation rates, and ensuring that every teacher has a college degree in the subject areas they teach is an important strategy for helping high school students succeed.

To view the entire survey results, go to <http://www.all4ed.org/NationalPollPowerPoint.ppt>



## More New Schools for Las Vegas

Clark County School District opened 10 new schools on August 29, 2005, the first day of the 2005-2006 school year, and one new school on September 19, 2005. The schools had been under construction since 2004. Each elementary school has a capacity of 720 students; middle schools 1,700 students; and the high school 2,700 students. The new schools are

### Elementary Schools    Middle Schools

- Batterman
- Goynes
- Hickey
- Jeffers
- Ries
- Tartan
- Thiriot

- Bailey
- Mack
- Webb

### High Schools

- Arbor View

The schools will be staffed by 474 teachers.

Joseph E. Thiriot School is a new two-story prototype building, which had greater design challenges and construction delays, resulting in the later opening date.

Pictured below is the Joseph E. Thiriot Elementary School. It has registered approximately 430 students to date.



## Excellence Panel Selected

Governor **Kenny Guinn** appointed members to the state's new Educational Excellence Commission that will be charged with allocating millions of dollars to Nevada's schools. The commission will decide which programs will be funded for Nevada schools and districts.

Named to the panel were **George Ann Rice**, representing urban school administrators; **Max Brown** and **Adriana Ocampo**, elementary teacher representatives; **Chanda Cook**, representing parents; **Pete Hall**, elementary principal representative; **Roger Jacks**, secondary principal representative; **Caroline McIntosh**, representing rural school administrators; **Bernice Servilican**, secondary teacher representative; and **Keith Rheault**, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The panel met for the first time on September 28, 2005, to determine the application process. Schools will be encouraged to use their school improvement plans as the basis for their applications. Approximately \$92 million will be distributed over the next two years to help improve the schools.

Application forms for the program, S.B. 404, were sent to schools and districts on October 15, 2005. They will also be available on the Department of Education's website at:

<http://www.doe.nv.gov>

Panel Chair **George Ann Rice** commented, "We are looking forward to making a significant contribution through the process of approving programs which have the potential to improve student achievement."



## Blueprint for High School Improvement Launched

On September 15, 2005, **Governor Kenny Guinn**, in collaboration with the Nevada Department of Education, launched Nevada's Blueprint for High School Improvement, STARS,\* at the Nevada High School Improvement Summit meeting. Sponsored by the State Board of Education, Nevada Department of Education, Nevada Association of School Administrators and Nevada Association of School Superintendents, attending policy makers from government, education, business and the community heard key elements of the plan.

**Dr. Bill Daggett**, President of the International Center for Leadership in Education, delivered the keynote address, *Reforming America's High Schools—Why, What, and How?* In previous work with the Center, Nevada has provided professional development and an array of resources to initiate needed reforms in high schools. The Center's vision, emphasizing rigor, relevance and relationships, has been incorporated into the STARS plan.

Nevada's Blueprint, STARS, is being led by Deputy Superintendent **Gloria Dopf**. She has guided the application process for the STARS plan, which is being submitted to the National Governor's Association for funding. Deputy Superintendent Dopf stated, "There has been an exciting collaboration of major education, business and agency leaders advising our workgroup on what is needed to improve Nevada's high schools. We have shaped the STARS plan to fit Nevada's growing needs and ensure that Nevada's schools produce well-prepared high school graduates."

**\* STARS**

Status Targets Actions Results Status




## Nevada Teacher Honored



Nevada's 2005 Teacher of the Year, **Scott Panik**, was honored at a White House reception with Teachers of the Year from other states. Mr. Panik is pictured on the left, next to First Lady **Laura Bush** and President **George W. Bush**. Panik is a physics teacher at Green Valley High School.



## Congratulations...

- McDermitt High School student **Katie Hill** was selected to attend the 2005 National Council for Community and Education Partnerships in San Francisco. The Booz Allen Hamilton Youth Leadership Summit selects GEAR UP students based on their academic achievements and leadership.
- Seven Nevada students were selected as semifinalists for the 2005 Presidential Scholars Program: **Andrew Ball**, Wooster High School; **Molly Carr** of Reno; **Jordan Hosmer-Henner**, McQueen High School; **Audrey Pak**, Reno High School; **Sneha Parikh**, Green Valley High School; **Alexander Solomon**, The Meadows School; and **Quincy Sweeney**, Reed High School. The students were identified as candidates for the awards based on their performance on the College Board SAT or ACT tests.
- U.S. Secretary of Education **Margaret Spellings** announced the two Nevada Presidential Scholars on May 11, 2005. **Alexander Solomon** of the Meadows School and **Quincy Sweeney** of Reed High School were the two Nevada students chosen and were honored for their accomplishments during the program's National Recognition Week, held in June in Washington, D.C.
- **Lori Ketner** of Hug High School was selected to attend the Presidential Classroom Law & Justice in a Democracy Program held in Washington, D.C. The Presidential Classroom Program is a nonprofit, nonpartisan civic education organization, that prepares young leaders for responsible citizenship.
- Sparks High School student **Lissa Henrickson** was the recipient of the first Dell Scholar in Nevada. Henrickson graduated last school year; she participated in the Advancement Via Individual Determination Program, a requirement to receive the award. She received a \$20,000 scholarship as one of 150 students nationwide recognized for academic achievement and overcoming great personal challenges. The scholarships are provided annually by the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.
- **Christopher Ruiz-Gardner** of Durango High School and **John-Henry Lambin**, a homeschool student in Gardnerville, were honored in Washington, D.C. for outstanding volunteer work by Prudential Spirit of Community Awards Program. Each student received a \$1,000 award and personal congratulations from **General Colin Powell**. Ruiz-Gardner organized a community clothing drive to assist the homeless, and Lambin created "Kids Extreme," a program that supports young people who have asthma and dyslexia and educates others about the conditions.
- Jacks Valley Elementary School teacher **Susan Hoffman** attended the "We the People: The Citizen and Constitution" institute at James Madison University in Virginia studying the U.S. Constitution. A requirement for attending the institute is that Hoffman must teach her sixth grade students the "We the People" curriculum, focusing on early governments that led to the thinking of our Constitution framers.
- McQueen High School Principal **John Carlson** was named one of two "Principals of the Year" by Amity Institute, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building international friendship and cultural understanding through teacher exchanges. Carlson was chosen because of his support for the program, encouraging students to take Spanish, German or French language classes, and financial support for the school's World Languages Department.
- **Sharon Pearson**, fourth-grade teacher at Sandy Miller Middle School, was selected with 25 other teachers from across the country to participate in the JASON Project *Mysteries of Earth and Mars*. Teachers partnered with leading scientists and NASA engineers to investigate the principles of space travel and to compare and contrast the geology of Earth and Mars. Pearson traveled to the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena and Meteor Crater in Arizona for workshops and trainings as part of the Summer Teacher Institute scientific experiences.
- Carson City School Superintendent **Mary Pierczynski** was chosen as Nevada's Superintendent of the Year. **Charlotte Petersen**, President of the Nevada Association of School Superintendents, said Pierczynski was chosen as Superintendent of the Year for her efforts during the 2005 Legislature and for her service to the Association as vice president. The selection also qualifies Dr. Pierczynski as a candidate for 2005 national superintendent by the American Association of School Superintendents. 

## Nevada State Board of Education Members Conduct Annual Retreat



Pictured above left to right are State Board of Education members **Dorothy Nolan**, Student Member **Louis Mendiola**, **Patrick Boylan**, **Merv Iverson**, **Cindy Reid**, **Barbara Myers**, **Sharon Frederick**, President **John Gwaltney**, **Gary Waters** and Clerk **Cliff Ferry**. Not pictured is State Board Vice President **Marcia Washington**.

Members of the Nevada State Board of Education met at their annual retreat on August 18 and 19, 2005 in Incline Village. Board members discussed state and national issues affecting education and heard presentations by **Janet Cannon** from the National Association of School Boards; **Jason Unger** and **Liane Lee**, representing Senator **Harry Reid**; **Michael Hillerby**, Chief of Staff for Governor **Kenny Guinn**; **Ken Lange**, Executive Director of the Nevada State Education Association; and **Randy Robison**, Executive Director of the Nevada Association of School Boards.

Additional topics of discussion focused on opportunities for the state's P-16 Council, platforms for the 2007 Nevada legislature, raising student achievement, local school district operational costs, and *No Child Left Behind's* Adequate Yearly Progress expectations. Joining in the discussions with State Board members were local school board members **Sheila Moulton**, Clark County; **Curt Chapman**, Storey County; **Sharla Hales**, Douglas County; and **Norm Scoggin**, Carson City.

**Mary Pierczynski**, Carson City Superintendent, **John Soderman**, Douglas County Superintendent and **Dotty Merrill**, representing Washoe County Superintendent **Paul Dugan**, endorsed the State Board's plans for cooperative planning for common goals among Nevada's various educational groups as preparation for the 2007 state legislative session.

The State Board approved the following priorities for the 2006 fiscal year:

- NCLB/IDEA
- Charter Schools
- Accountability and Assessment
- Creating Collaborative Partnerships
- Teacher Preparation and Development
- Safety, Security and Health

In addition, three task forces were formed, which will study and make recommendations on emergency preparedness, special appropriation needs and curriculum alignment.

State Board President **John Gwaltney** noted that he was "pleased with the focus and intensity of the Board's decisions."

(Superintendent's Message continued from page 1)

According to the authors of the report, the following efforts would improve our schools:

- Make education a priority.
- Prepare teachers better, especially for teaching English language learners.
- Use timely student data to make teaching improvements.
- Implement research-based strategies to reduce achievement gaps.
- Create a statewide plan for high schools.
- Increase access to quality infant/toddler daycare and pre-school.
- Provide schools with more financial resources.

It's no longer a question of not knowing what to do. We can turn our schools around with hard work and determination. I think Nevada is ready to accept the challenge.

The complete WestEd report can be viewed at [www.WestEd.org/nevadareport](http://www.WestEd.org/nevadareport)

*Keith W. Rhault*

## Nevada Report Card

The Annual Reports of Accountability, also known as the Nevada Report Card, are now available via the Internet. Readers can access school, district and state level information at:

<http://nevadareportcard.com>

This is the second year for this site information. Report elements include demographic profiles, fiscal allocations, student dropout and graduation rates, teacher attendance, parental participation, assessments, and Adequate Yearly Progress for all public schools and districts.

**Nevada State Board of Education/  
Nevada State Board for  
Occupational Education**

**Members**

John Gwaltney, President  
Marcia L. Washington, Vice President  
Cliff Ferry, Clerk  
Patrick J. Boylan  
Sharon Frederick  
Merv Iverson  
Barbara Myers  
Dorothy M. Nolan  
Cynthia M. Reid  
Gary Waters  
Louis Mendiola, Student Member

Keith W. Rheault  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

This publication is distributed free. The newsletter may be reprinted in whole or in part except for copyrighted or reprinted materials. It is designed to inform educators and other citizens about programs and activities of public education in Nevada.

News about your school, students and teachers is welcome. The Department of Education reserves the right to print all or part of any information submitted. Please direct your news or inquiries to Bill Arensdorf or Charmaine Martineau, Nevada Department of Education, 1749 Moody Street, Carson City, Nevada 89706; Tel. 775.687.9174.

The Nevada Department of Education is an equal opportunity/affirmative action agency. The Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, political affiliation, disability or sexual orientation.

**MISSION: The Nevada Department of Education provides leadership, resources, assistance and oversight, in partnership with school districts and others, to support student achievement and future success.**

**NDE Leadership Offices**

**Assessments, Program Accountability & Curriculum**

Tel. 775.687.9186

**Career, Technical & Adult Education**

Tel. 775.687.9100

**Child Nutrition & School Health**

Tel. 775.687.9154

**Department Operations**

Tel. 775.687.9102

**Fiscal Accountability**

Tel. 775.687.9174

**Fiscal Services**

Tel. 775.687.9107

**Special Education, ESEA & School Improvement**

Tel. 775.687.9171

**Teacher Licensure**

- Carson City Tel. 775.687.9115
- Las Vegas Tel. 702.486.6458

**Technology & Innovative Programs**

Tel. 775.687.9141

*Please circulate or photocopy the Nevada Department of Education  
Newsletter for maximum distribution*

PRRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Carson City, NV 89701  
Permit No. 15

9017  
Nevada Department of Education  
700 E. Fifth Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701  
Return Service Requested